Chris Merz (MM '90 Jazz Composition/Arranging) is the Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Northern Iowa. He directs award winning UNI Jazz Band One, coordinates the combo program, and teaches other jazz-related courses as well as applied saxophone and Music of Our Time: Jazz Styles. He is also the director of the UNI Combo Camp, an annual event for high school jazz students and music educators which takes place in June. Chris was a member of the UMass faculty from 1994 to 1997, and also taught at the University of Natal and the University of Wyoming at Laramie.

Merz has toured four continents with members of the Brubeck family, including Dave Brubeck. He has performed with many of the giants of South African jazz, including Barney Rachabane, Winston Mankunku Ngosi, Hugh Masekela, and Joseph Shabalala (Ladysmith Black Mambazo). He has played lead alto saxophone with several East Coast big bands, including the Cecil Bridgewater Big Band. His own projects include the X-tet, a 12-piece big band, and Equilateral, a sax/trumpet/bass/drums quartet, who appeared at the Iowa City Jazz Festival in 2001. He performs frequently with Des Moines organist Sam Salamone.

Chris has several compact discs to his credit, including his newest effort, *Also Not Pictured*…featuring Equilateral. The X-tet's release, *Mystery is My Story*, prompted Dave Brubeck to write, "I am very pleased with this wonderful band. Naturally I would admire a group like yours that, to me, is a grand extension of what we were doing…when we were the 'new thing'." He has received commissions from university and high school jazz ensembles throughout the country. His compositions and arrangements are published by UNC Jazz Press. He is also a highly sought after guest soloist, clinician and conductor at university and high school jazz festivals nationwide.

He currently resides in Cedar Falls with his wife, Jill, and their two sons, Benjamin and Matthew.

Upcoming Department of Music and Dance Event

University Orchestra and Choirs
Lanfranco Marcelletti, Jr., and E. Wayne Abercrombie, directors
Thursday, March 11, 2004
8:00 p.m., Fine Arts Center Concert Hall

University of Massachusetts
Department of Music and Dance

23rd Annual Jazz Showcase

Spotlight On The Saxophone

featuring special guests
Chris Merz, Frederick Tillis, Adam Kolker

and

Jazz Ensemble I, Jeffrey Holmes, director/producer
Chapel Jazz Ensemble, Dave Sporny, director
Vocal Jazz Ensemble, Catherine Jensen-Hole, director
Jazz Lab Ensemble, Susumu Watanabe, director
UMass Jazz Quintet
UMass Jazz Saxophone Quartet

Tuesday, March 9, 2004
Fine Arts Center Concert Hall, 8:00 p.m.

Program

Easy to Love — Cole Porter
arr. Charlie Young

Song for Strayhorn — Gerry Mulligan
orchestrated by Dave Sporny

Big Dipper — Thad Jones

Chapel Jazz Ensemble

Chris Merz, soprano

Tenor Madness — Sonny Rollins
arr. Michele Weir

Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Nature Boy — Eden Aborh

Frederick Tillis, soprano

Woodyn' You — Dizzy Gillespie
arr. Mike Tomaro

Dearly Beloved — Johnny Mercer
arr. Richard DeRosa

Jazz Lab Ensemble

Chris Merz, tenor

Loudzee — Jerry Bergonzi

Jazz Quintet:

Pete Levesque, alto; Jon Bean, tenor; Lincoln Allen, guitar
Jesse Richards, bass and Glenn Robertson, drums

~intermission~

Presentation of Department of Music and Dance Distinguished Alumni Award to Christopher Linn Merz

Four Bothers — Jimmy Guiffre/Jon Hendricks
arr. Manhatten Transfer
realized by Paris Rutherford

Vocal Jazz Ensemble

Naima — John Coltrane

Adama Kolker and Lena Bloch, tenors

The Bandstand: Movement II — Phil Woods

Jazz Sax Quartet:

Jon Bean, soprano; Pete Levesque, alto
Joe Mayo, tenor and Jared Weaver, baritone

Get Happy — Koehler/Arlen
arr. Chris Merz

Deluge — Wayne Shorter
arr. Chris Merz

Tones for Joan's Bones — Chick Corea
arr. Jeff Holmes

Jazz Ensemble I with Woodwind Consort

Chris Merz, tenor and soprano

Encore: Oleo — Sonny Rollins

Fredrick Tillis, Adam Kolker and Chris Merz

with Glenn Robertson, drums; Jesse Richards, bass
Jeff Holmes, piano

Woodwind Consort:

Sarah Barsamian and Dominique Gagne, flute/piccolo
Jen Cornetta and Christine Manseau, clarinet
Lauren Kapalka, oboe
Leola Carey, bassoon
Malena Ballon and Megan Riccio, horn
consort orchestrations by Jeff Holmes